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SUBJECT: CANADA: SECOND LIFE SENTENCE FOR ANOTHER TERRORIST

REF: TORONTO 62; TORONTO 54; TORONTO 38

¶1. (U) A Quebec court in Montreal on February 17 laid down a life sentence for Moroccan-born Said Namouh on a charge of conspiracy to detonate an explosive device, on which he had been convicted in October 2009. The court at the same time gave him concurrent sentences of four, eight, and eight years for other convictions in the same case --participating in a terrorist act, facilitating an act of terrorism, and committing extortion for a terrorist group (the Global Islamic Media Front). The judge described Namouh as "very dangerous" and "remorseless," and contrasted him specifically with some other convicted terrorists in the Toronto 18 case who received notably lighter sentences (refs a and b). However, one of the Toronto 18 - ringleader Zakaria Amara - had received the first life sentence under Canada's anti-terrorism legislation on January 18 in Toronto (ref c).

¶2. (U) Namouh moved to Canada in 2003 and is a landed immigrant married to a Quebec woman. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police arrested him in rural Quebec in September 2007. He had prepared a ransom video for the Army of Islam after it kidnapped BBC reporter Alan Johnston in Gaza in March 2007. Canadian officials discovered evidence on his computer of plans to set off explosions in Germany or Austria. Citing Namouh's address to the court at his sentencing hearing in November 2009, the judge concluded that "in no way since the events has he distanced himself from terrorism," and he accused Namouh of "manipulating the court."

¶3. (U) Namouh will become eligible for parole in 2017, ten years after his initial arrest under Canadian regulations. The government has reportedly begun deportation hearings. The prosecutor in the case commented that this life sentence demonstrates to would-be terrorists that "you cannot come into Canada to carry out a plot here or elsewhere. We are not a safe haven."

¶4. (U) Comment: this second life sentence for a convicted terrorist in Canada is welcome news in Canada's counter-terrorism efforts, and belies the reputation for leniency that Canadian courts have sometimes earned.

JACOBSON